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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 001338

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: ABU DHABI GOVERNMENT UNVEILS ITS "POLICY AGENDA 2007-2008"
-- STEPS TOWARD "TRANSPARENCY"

Classified by: CDA Martin Quinn for reasons 1.4(b),(d).

¶1. (U) Ambassadors and Charges of foreign embassies in Abu Dhabi were called to a meeting on August 6 at the Emirates Palace Hotel for a roll-out on its new "Emirate of Abu Dhabi Policy Agenda 2007-2008." Diplomats were given a half-hour powerpoint presentation followed by brief Q&A on the Abu Dhabi Emirate's comprehensive policy agenda.

¶2. (U) The 83-page agenda, in English and Arabic, consists of 18 independent policy statements providing detailed analysis of the Abu Dhabi Emirate's plans in areas as diverse as: planning and economy, energy, tourism, health, education, labor, civil services, culture and heritage, food control, urban planning, transport, environment, health and safety, municipal affairs, police and emergency services, electronic government, women's affairs, and legislative reform. The formidable document, a year in preparation, has been available electronically on the UAE Government (WAM) official website since August 1 -- when the agenda was formally announced to the media.

¶3. (SBU) UAE presenters Mohammed Mubarak Al Mazrouie, Vice Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Affairs Authority, and Yousef Al Otaiba, Director of International Affairs of the Crown Prince's Court, emphasized that the Policy Agenda would provide: (1) transparency, (2) accountability, and (2) a measure of government performance. Presenters stressed that the Agenda would help to streamline the bureaucracy, provide better coordination between Emirate departments, and enable members of the private sector and international observers easier access to Abu Dhabi Emirate officials -- identifying who is in charge of which initiative and thereby allowing the Abu Dhabi Executive Council to spend most of its time on "strategic issues" rather than fielding inquiries. The Agenda was described as "a living document" subject to modification and revision on an annual basis. Subsequent Policy Agendas would note progress in individual departments and new initiatives, and would encapsulate the "vision" of the Abu Dhabi Government.

¶4. (C) Comment: Although the Policy Agenda does not break new ground in terms of who runs the country (or the Emirate) -- making frequent references to the "wisdom" of Abu Dhabi ruler (and UAE President) Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan as the final arbiter of policy -- it does usefully identify areas in which greater efficiency, transparency, and interagency coordination can improve government functions. It also ratifies the emirate's ongoing efforts to outsource in some areas (such as education and health), and more effective utilization of technology (through e-government initiatives). The very public unveiling of the agenda as well as Abu Dhabi's recent successful efforts to obtain a sovereign bond rating and to price five-year bonds to create a "benchmark" for other Emirate of Abu Dhabi borrowers also commit the Emirate's government to taking some small steps toward increased governmental transparency. End Comment.

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